

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: Pier 43 Promenade Project; Second Review
(For Board consideration on May 10, 2010)

Project Summary

Applicant: The Port of San Francisco (Port)

Project Representatives: Dan Hodapp, the Port of San Francisco; Steven Reel, the Port of San Francisco

Project Purpose. The goal of the proposed project is to improve the public realm by removing most of Pier 43-1/2, repairing and/or reconstructing the shoreline and existing seawall, constructing a new pedestrian promenade, installing sidewalk improvements, and creating other public spaces in the Fisherman's Wharf area, between Powell and Taylor Streets, in the City and County of San Francisco. Several small commercial uses (vendor carts and some outdoor dining) are also proposed in order to activate the waterfront and replace lost revenue sources.

Project Status. A Negative Declaration of Environmental Impacts was prepared by the City of San Francisco Planning Department and accepted by the City Planning Commission in 2009. The Commission will likely hold a public hearing and vote on the project sometime this summer. The Design Review Board (Board) previously reviewed the project at its February 8, 2010 meeting in San Francisco.

Project Site. For the past several decades, Pier 43-1/2 has been used for parking to serve the Franciscan Restaurant (the Franciscan) and other Fisherman's Wharf destinations. The pier has been repaired several times since 1990 and, in 2008, was closed permanently due to deteriorating structural conditions. The seawall where the pier begins is located approximately five feet north of the northern curb of the adjacent Embarcadero Roadway. The Embarcadero is the primary access route to the fishing industry operations on Pier 45.

Existing Public Access. Public access currently exists throughout most of the project area. As stated above, Pier 43-1/2 has been closed for safety reasons. The Ferry Arch and Pier 43, however, are open to the public. There is currently a sidewalk running along the northern side of the Embarcadero Roadway between Pier 43 and the Franciscan, where the new promenade would be located, and a promenade between Pier 43-1/2 and Pier 45, both of which are open to the public. In addition, there is an existing 2,900-square-foot public access deck at the tip of Pier 43-1/2, which is currently structurally sound but inaccessible to the public because the rest of Pier 43-1/2 is closed. The public access deck contains a display of a historic sounding bell and a reconstruction of its cone shaped sounding board.



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Proposed Project. The Port has modified the project design since it was first brought to the Board on February 8, 2010 (Exhibit B). The revised project would involve removing approximately 55,000 square feet of Pier 43-1/2, repairing approximately 400 feet of seawall between Powell and Mason Streets and constructing 14,600 square feet of pile-supported promenade, repairing and reconfiguring the remaining portion of Pier 43-1/2 to the north of the Franciscan as a 15 to 53-foot-wide public access space, constructing an approximately 4,100-square-foot public access plaza area between the Pier 43 Ferry Arch and the new promenade, and constructing a 12-foot-wide pedestrian bridge connecting the newly-configured Pier 43-1/2 to an existing 2,900-square-foot public access deck (at the tip of the existing Pier 43-1/2).

Within the new public access that would plaza connect Pier 43 to the new promenade, the Port is considering installing a kids play area containing a play structure or sculpture and five picnic tables. The newly constructed promenade between Powell and Mason Streets would extend 20 feet bayward of the seawall. The new promenade would be approximately 35 feet wide because the promenade would also extend 15 feet inland of the seawall. At this location, a new 300-foot-long curb bulb-out would be installed to discourage vehicles from stopping and dropping-off at this prime viewing area, with the intent to maintain a view corridor to the Bay from Jefferson Street (1 block inland). The new pedestrian bridge connecting Pier 43-1/2 to the offshore public access deck with the historic bell display, would have a paved surface, a railing with light-weight materials, and be entered through a portal with a roll down gate that would be closed at night. The total number of proposed benches throughout the project area would be reduced to approximately 45 from 75.

As the Port discussed at the February 8, 2010 meeting, they have not yet acquired funding for all the proposed activities described above and shown in the Pier 43 Promenade Master Plan (Exhibit B). Currently, they propose to construct the project in phases starting with the work shown within the boundaries of the project's base bid (See Exhibit B) and then completing alternatives A, B, and C as funding becomes available.

Proposed Commercial Uses. All of the aforementioned areas, the new promenade and the new pedestrian walkway would be available for public access with the exception of an 800-square-foot area on the east side of the Franciscan, which would be used by the restaurant for outdoor dining. In addition, vendor carts are proposed at three locations: in the pedestrian area in front of Pier 45 Shed A; on Pier 43-1/2 at the east end of the Franciscan; and at the east end of the new public access plaza at Pier 43. BCDC staff and Port staff are still working to determine the appropriate size, number, and distribution of vendor carts and will likely bring this component of the project to the Board for a future review.

Prior Board Review and Project Sponsor Response. The Design Review Board first reviewed this project at its February 8, 2010 meeting in San Francisco, and commented on several aspects of the public access design, including:

1. **Connection Between Pier 43-1/2 and the New Promenade.** The Board raised concerns that the section of the promenade at the northeast corner of the Franciscan may not be wide enough to accommodate the anticipated level of use by the public and that pedestrians and bicyclists may feel "squished". Some of the Board members expressed concern that the entire new promenade between Pier 43 and 43 ½ may be too narrow. In addition, the Board commented that the public access space on the east side of the Franciscan (at the Mason Street terminus), should be designed in such a way as to draw the public to the space from both Pier 43 and Mason Street, which will eventually be extended through the triangular parking lot so that it connects through to the promenade.

Project Sponsor Response. The Port has revised the project design to widen the portion of promenade at the east end of the Franciscan from 22 to 25 feet. In addition, the revised plan eliminates the two vendor carts from the public access space and relocates them further east and closer to Embarcadero Roadway. The Port has also relocated the cluster of six benches along the promenade roughly 25 feet to the southeast and reduced the number of benches to three.

2. **Ferry Arch.** The Board commented that the historic ferry arch is a structure of significance and suggested that the Port consider designing the promenade and the adjacent project area to better incorporate the arch, such as providing a wider promenade edge on the bayward side of the arch. The Board further commented that if it was not possible for the Port to utilize the arch in the current promenade project, they should at least design the project in such a way that future projects that might incorporate the arch would not be undermined.

Project Sponsor Response. While the revised project design does not propose any changes to Pier 43 itself, the Port has incorporated a new 4,100-square-foot public access area between the new promenade and Pier 43. The space would include a kids play area and five picnic tables. The new space would provide an area where the public can linger and enjoy views of the Ferry Arch as well as provide a better connection between Pier 43 and the promenade.

3. **Pier 43-1/2 and Pedestrian Bridge.** The Board raised concerns regarding the area on the north side of the Franciscan. They commented that the public access space may become congested as the public enters and leaves the new pedestrian bridge and suggested that the Port further study the design of this connection between the bridge and promenade.

Project Sponsor Response. The Port has redesigned the public access space on the north side of the Franciscan to reshape the 6,300-square-foot triangular public access plaza area and eliminate the raised viewing deck. The revised project would construct up to a 53-foot-wide public access area that would almost entirely open except for a row of five benches along the bayward edge of the promenade.

4. **Furnishings Along the Promenade.** The Board suggested that the Port consider reducing the number of furnishings along the promenade in order to avoid cluttering the space. They also suggested relocating certain furnishings, such as light poles, closer to the Embarcadero Roadway in order to make the space as usable and to facilitate pedestrian flow.

Project Sponsor Response. The Port has revised the design of the new promenade between Piers 43 and 43-1/2 to remove the planter along the Embarcadero Roadway, relocate several furnishings (such as light poles) closer to the roadway, and reduce the number of benches.

Other Design Review Issues. At this second review, the Project Sponsor is presenting an overview of the revised project design. The Board's comments are sought as to whether the public access design is consistent with the Commission's Public Access Design Guidelines and whether the changes in design satisfy the Board's concerns and comments raised during the first review.

1. **Pier 43 / Ferry Arch Public Access Plaza.** The Board's advice is sought as to whether the public access plaza at Pier 43, adjacent to the Ferry Arch: (1) provides appropriate recreational and public access amenities; (2) improves the connection to the promenade and adjacent spaces; and (3) enhances the public's experience of the Ferry Arch and Pier 43.

2. **Public Access Around the Franciscan Restaurant.** The Port is proposing to include a 15-foot-wide promenade on the north side of the Franciscan as part of the initial base bid for the project. As proposed, the Port would construct 38 feet of additional public access area in this space if funding becomes available. The staff has concerns that a 15-foot-wide promenade on the north side of the Franciscan is inadequate to accommodate the level of use expected along this section of the waterfront. Because the south side of the Franciscan (part of the Bay Trail) continues to be constricted as a viable trail by a narrow sidewalk and large elevator structure, it is anticipated that the public will favor the use of the promenade on the north side of the Franciscan, once the project has been implemented. Delaying the construction of the wider public access area on the north side of the building may limit the connectivity of this public access area to the adjacent spaces and portions of promenade.

The Board's input is sought as to whether the revised size, shape and geometry of the new public access areas and final configuration of the pier edge are appropriate to provide an open and inviting public access experience and an adequate connection to the adjacent spaces. Further, the Board's comments are sought as to whether the Port's redesign of the area on the north side of the Franciscan sufficiently addresses their concerns of providing a more open connection to the proposed pedestrian bridge. In addition, the Board's advice is sought as to whether the widening of the promenade at the northeast corner of the Franciscan to 25 feet is sufficient given the number of visitors that will likely move around the building. Finally, the Board's advice is sought as to whether the modifications to the public access space at the Mason Street terminus and the portion of promenade at the east end of the Franciscan (i.e. removing benches and vendor carts) sufficiently addresses their concerns regarding the usability and openness of those spaces.

3. **Pier 43 ½ Pedestrian Bridge and Bell Display Platform.** The Port proposes to retain the existing 2,900-square-foot deck at the tip of Pier 43 ½ for public access. The deck is approximately 200 feet offshore from the promenade edge. The bell display was originally located at Pier 1, next to the San Francisco Ferry Building. The removal of the deck would create a new open water basin, providing improved Bay views. Since, the construction of the new pedestrian bridge would be the last bid alternative for the project, it is uncertain when the bridge would be installed. Until the pedestrian bridge is constructed, the deck would remain separated from the shoreline. Also, the deck would pose a potential navigation obstacle to current and future potential ferry service.

The Board's opinion is sought as to whether the bell and public access deck should be retained in its current position or relocated.